

Athenian News :

O R,

Dunton's Oracle.

From **Saturday** April the 22d, to **Tuesday** April the 25th, 1710.

The Time of the singing of Birds is come—— or the Musical Post, *intermix'd with Variety of diverting Poems on the Nightingale, Lark, Finch, Canary Bird, and other feather'd Choiristers of the Groves and Hedges, writ by the chief Wits of the Age.*

For lo! the Winter is past, the Rain is over and gone, the Flowers appear on the Earth, the Time of the singing of Birds is come, *Cant. II. 11, 12.*

R E A D E R,

IN my last Post I gave you a merry Essay on—the Musick of Birds—and as their Time for singing is come, I shall continue the Subject in this Paper, for I have made a voluntary Retreat from the World and Business, on Purpose to hear their Melody, and am so greatly delighted with it that now my Ambition shall never swell above the humble Title of *John the Hermit*; or were I an Earthly Monarch, who wou'd not rather sit at the Foot of an Hill, tending a Flock of Sheep, or listening to the Musick of Birds, than at the Helm of Authority controlling the stubborn and unruly Multitude? for here am I addicted to study; Heaven is my Library, the Sun, Moon and Stars my Books, the Groves, Fields and Birds my Tutors. I have already describ'd the Grove where I go every Morning to hear 'em sing, and shall here (having already paid my Respects to that broad-fac'd Chorister the Bird of Athens) give a distinct Account of those sweet and ravishing Ditties that are made by the feather'd Minstrels in Otley Grove.

And first here's *PHILOMEL*, the King of Songsters, comes to divert me with his musical Airs.

I.

*Hark! Hark! how in Otley Grove
Sweet Philomel is warbling Love.*

*But, little Charmer of the Air,
Don't thus in Musick spend the Morn,
Whilst I thus languish in Despair,
Oppress'd by Celia's Hate and Scorn.
Why dost thou sing and hear me cry?
Tell, wanton Songster, tell me why.*

II.

*Wilt thou not cease at my Desire?
Will those small Organs never tire?
Nature did this close Grove prepare,
Not for thy Musick, but my Care.
Then why wilt thou persist to sing,
Thou beautiful malicious Thing?
When kind Aurora first appears,
She weeps in Pity to my Tears.
If thus thou think'st to give Relief,
Thou never knew'st a Lover's Grief.*

III.

*Thou feather'd Atom, where in thee
Can be compriz'd such Harmony?
In whose small Fabrick must remain
What Composition does contain.
All Grievs but mine are at a Stand,
When thy surprizing Tunes command.
How can so small a Tongue and Throat
Express so loud and sweet a Note?
Thou hast more various Points at Will
Than Orpheus had with all his Skill.*

IV.

*Great to the Ear, tho' small to Sight,
The happy Lover's dear Delight,
Fly to the Bow'r where such are laid,
And there bestow thy Serenade.
Hast from my Sorrow, hast away,
Alas there's Danger in thy Stay;
Lest bearing me so oft complain,
Shou'd make thee change thy chearful Strain.
Thy Songs cannot my Grief remove,
Thou harmless Syren of the Grove.*

Mind but that Treble which sounds so high, then mark
the deep strain'd Base. She rises and falls in her Note
just

just with the Rules of Musick, and alters her Voice to all Keys: Her Throat wou'd ravish the dullest Ear; and which is more amazing, sings Fifteen Days and Nights together.

*O thou Angelick Spirit, Fate and Voice!
Sweet Syren! whose soft Notes our Souls rejoyce:
Yet when thou dost recite some Tragick Verse,
Thy Tone and Action make it sweetly fierce.
If thou soft, loud, sad, or brisk Note dost hit,
It carries still our Hearts along with it.
Thou canst heat, cool, grieve us, or make us smile,
Nay, stab or kill, yet hurt us not the while:
Thy Gesture, Shape and Mien so pleasing are,
With thee no Human Being can compare.
Thy Passions all our Passions do excite,
And thy feign'd Grief does real Tears invite.
List'ning to thee, our Bodies seem as dead,
For our rapt Souls then up to Heaven are fled.
So great a Monarch art thou that thy Breath
Has Power to give us either Life or Death.*

In a Word, the ravishing Ditties of the *Orley* Nightingale are out-done by no Musick on Earth but *Philomela's* Voice, which has no Equal. — "*Philomela* (says a Reverend Author*) "has borrow'd the Name of the "*Nightingale*, and her Numbers are as sweet as the Voice "of that is musical. — 'Tis in Heaven only where her Harmony can be exceeded.

*When I but hear her sing, I fare
Like one that raised holds his Ear
To some bright Star in the supremest Round,
Thro' which, besides the Light that's seen,
There may be heard from Heaven within,
The blessed Anthems that the Angels sound.*

Now if the Singing but of one Nightingale be such Heavenly Musick, what must the whole Choir of Birds make? — Then, Reader, leave that noisy Hive the City, and come and enjoy your self in the Country: Come, come with me, under the cool Shades of *Orley* Grove and Beech, come where no other Inchantment shall fill your Ears, than the Chanting of the Nightingale, nor any other Murmurs than that of the Christal Brooks, where all Favours and Benefits are expected from the Bounty of Heaven, not of Men. Here you shall see *Philomel* innocently displaying her Wings, and freely roving in the Grove from Tree to Tree, and with the Air of her Wings mingle the sweet Air and warbling Notes of her Voice. There is no Pipe in the World makes sweeter Musick than the Nightingale.

I.

*And next to Philomel I hear
The Turtle cooing in my Ear;
And just by her (O tempting Note!)
The Thrush sits tuning with her Throat.*

II.

*Hark how the Black-bird too in yonder Tree,
Hid in the Boughs, warbles melodiously*

*Her various Musick forth, while the whole Choir
Of other Birds flock round, and all admire!*

The *Linnet* and *Bull-finch* too sing sweetly, and I find now re-produce themselves without losing their Unity, they revive without dying, and wonder that their cold Nest in a Moment can hatch little ones as big as themselves.

And the *Robbin*, the *Wren*, and the *Tom-tit* are as merry as the best.

But of all the Birds in *Orley* Grove, none tickl'd my Fancy so much as the bold *Mag-pie*. He's all Chatter, Chatter, Tittle, Tattle, and a Scold to Boot. There's not a Word that he speaks, or sings, (for 'tis all one, now my Hand's in) but has *Knave* or *Slut* at the End on't. Besides, he's a meer Tell-tale. The Master can't kiss his Maid but streight cries *Mag* — *I know who kiss'd Jenny*. — Sir *Charles* — was thus discover'd; nor does the Dame 'scape. I heard of a *Mag-pie*, such a Critick in Love, that the 'Prentice cou'd not steal one Glance from his Mistress, but the *Wag* wou'd read their Souls in their very Eyes, and cry out — *Dick's a Cuckold, Dick's a Cuckold*, meaning the Husband; (and for that Reason Sir *John* — cou'd never endure a *Mag-pie*, but said they had all a Devil in 'em.) 'Tis certain, the *Orley Mag-pie* (tho' but a chattering Choirister) is a roguish Spy, makes every Member of the Body vocal, and when he seems to listen to something else, grows familiar with your Appointments, and betrays them. He that won't believe this may come to *Orley* Grove, where he'll find a Swarm of *Mag-pies* chattering the prettiest Things, and if he don't hear 'em speak, as he may expect, he'll find they pay it off with thinking; and that's enough a Conscience for a meer Bird! Neither can you think I romance in this Account of the *Orley Mag-pies*, for, Reader, you have heard of *Apollonius's* understanding the *Sparrow's* Language, and why may not I as well the chattering *Mag-pie*?

However, I came to this Grove to hear a Consort of feather'd Musick, and rather than lose my Labour, I will (at least) imagine what a brave *Hautboy* the *Mag-pie's* Bills wou'd make, and then the *Black-bird's* wou'd do for a *Flagelet* to a Wonder: But while I was thus admiring those roguish *Mag-pies*, I was so lull'd with their chattering Musick, that (cou'd you believe it!) I fell stark asleep under a Tree, in the Midst of the Grove, and my Mind being full of the *Ideas* which were in my Head, e'er I fell asleep these *Mags* seem'd still to continue chattering, which now I understood better than when I was awake: But Reader, now I think on't, tho' I understood it you won't, and therefore I'll not be at the Pains and Charge of having new Characters cast, to express their Language, for it neither begins from the Left to the Right as ours, nor from the Right to the Left, as the *Eastern* nor from Top to Bottom, nor Bottom to Top, as others nor any Ways else that you or I can imagine, because 'twas inarticulate, and no Language at all. Don't call this trifling, for 'twas only brought in to describe a Company of the bravest chattering *Mag-pies* that you ever saw, or heard of.

But the *Mags* have chatter'd enough in my Ears, I'll now rouse my self (for I took but a short Nap) to hear the *Cuckoo* sing, for there's many of 'em in this Grove. The

*See the Preface to the Sermon preach'd at the Funeral of Mrs. Elizabeth Dunton, by the Reverend Mr. Timothy Rogers.

is a Bird so call'd by Reason of his Cry, which is nothing but *Cuckoo, Cuckoo, Cuckoo* : As *Mag* prates every thing, so this Bird is always in the same Tune, and is hated of every other Bird, because she spoileth their Nests and eats their Eggs. In the *Cuckoo* (the lewdest Songster in *Osley Grove*) is decipher'd the wicked Practice of adulterous Men, who are not asham'd to defile their Neighbour's Bed, from whence we call them *Cucko—ds*, who suffer this Wrong and yet are innocent ; whereas indeed the wanton Goat who performs the Villainy is the very *Cucko—d*, and the other (poor honest Man) wrong'd not only in his Bed, but in his Name, is the harmless Patient of what he cannot help. Then *Cuckoo* farewell, for thou art a lewd Bird, and I'll stay no longer in *Osley Grove* 'till Winter has sent thee again to the Place whence you came.

I might proceed to the Variety of other Notes made by the feather'd Choiristers, but here's enough to shew what a sweet and melodious *Aviary Osley* is, and I wou'd not be too tedious.

Thus when I have observ'd in a warm Morning how merrily the Birds did chirp and sing in *Osley Grove*, and what various Tunes and Notes they sent forth, each one adding something to the Melody, it has occasion'd this Meditation.

These poor Birds, that neither Reap nor Sow, nor carry into Barns, they neither Cark nor Care, Moil nor Toil, but live upon their Father's Providence, and when they have eat their Breakfast, know not where to have their Dinner, but depend upon their Maker's Allowance, and yet how merry are they ? They take no Care for the Morrow, but seek their Meat where Divine Providence doth direct them : Then, Reader, be not solicitous what thou shalt eat or wear ; Christians shou'd live as unconfin'd as Air, free as its wild Inhabitants from Care.

*As free and kind as happy Spirits above,
Exempt from all Concerns but those of Love :
Or if sad anxious Tears must give them Ease,
(For sometimes Melancholly it self does please)
Like Philomel, abandon'd to Distress,
Their very Grievs in Musick they express.*

Then be not cast down, Oh my Soul ! but if even Birds are merry, bear a Part with them in their Mirth, and think thy self at least as rich and happy as those silly Creatures. The World I see is as full for me as it is for them, all Places are crowded with the Blessings of God, and I know not where he shou'd bestow more they are so very full, and at present my Wants are all supply'd, and I have no Reason to doubt but they will be so for the Time to come ; for sure there is a God, and he must needs take Care of his Creatures, and therefore I conclude I shall never want.

After I have spent the Morning listening to the Musick of Birds, if it happens I have heard from the *Sybil* *, I grow merry too, and whistle my self, to bear 'em Company in their Melodies. After I have been in the Grove about Three Hours, I pull out of my Pocket a Piece of Bread and Cheese, which with Eyes lifted up to Heaven—I acknowledge a liberal Dinner—and at the End of it I pledge the Birds in a little Stream that runs by me, giving God Thanks again, that had provided Food for all his Creatures.

Having heard the Singing of the wild Inhabitants of the Air and Groves, I'll now (for the sake of Variety)

return Home, and listen to the *imprison'd Songsters*. A Bird in a Cage is a fit Subject for Meditation, and I think sings better than those at Liberty ; for I have a large Cage in my little Cell, where a *Sky-lark* sings as sweetly as if all the Musick of *Osley Grove* were sounding in her merry Throat ; but I see by this *Sky-lark*, that a Bird that has formerly rang'd the large Field of Air (with a careless, wanton and uncheck'd Wing) when 'tis newly taught to know the narrow Limits of a Cage, it will ask the Documents of some Time to instruct that little Creature to forget her Liberty, and reassume the Alacrity of her former chipping : Fetters of Gold do not lose their Nature, they are Fetters still. Liberty is so sweet and pleasant, that all Creatures naturally covet it, and tho' *Irrational*, are uneasy under Confinement. A *Turtle* thinks her self more happy in the Desert, than an *Eagle* in a gilded Cage ; yet 'tis observ'd of this feather'd *Libertine* (the *Sky-lark*) that tho' she sings and soars high, as if she meant to shew us Heaven, yet when she is mounted to her highest Pitch, she falls at once, and beds in the Earth, the basest of the Elements.

*Dear prison'd Bird, how do the Stars combine
To make my am'rous State resemble thine !
Thou, happy thou ! dost sing, and so do I,
Yet both of us have lost our Liberty.
For him thou sing'st who Captive thee detains,
And I for her who makes me wear her Chains :
But I, alas ! this Disproportion find,
Thou for Delight, I sing to ease my Mind :
Thy Heart's exalted, mine depress'd does lie,
Thou liv'st by singing, I by singing die.*

Thus have I shewn how the Inhabitants both of the Groves and Cages warble forth their Musick ; and as their Time for singing is come, so is their Time for making of Love, and building their Nests, for it is now *April*, and *St. Valentine* calls the Birds together where Nature is pleas'd with the Variety of Love, and the little winged Familists make Election of their Mates for building and keeping of House this Spring. The Birds that wander in the flow'ry Fields, in the wild Benefit of Nature, live happier than we, for they chuse their Mates, (as oft as they see Occasion) and carol their sweet Pleasures to the Spring. And besides these feather'd Courtships ('tis worth observing) there is a most tender Friendship between the *Black-Bird* and the *Thrush*, between the *Cbiff* and the *Heron*, between the *Peacocks* and the *Doves*. And as the Birds are now courting, so I think Nature's at a Wedding, of which expect a very merry and diverting Account in my *Third Musical-Post*—— which shan't fail of a Place in those Twelve Numbers that are to be publish'd altogether, to compleat the *First Volume* of *Danton's Oracle*.

The Casuistical-Post, or Athenian Mercury.

Quest. *Whether the Loss of Seed be the Loss of Souls ?*

Ans. Altho' this Subject may seem difficult at the first, yet, I trust, may receive a reasonable Answer ; for the Adversaries of this Doctrine do thus Reason against it : If the Soul be propagated by the

* Alluding to the *Sybil-Post*, or *Ideal Kingdom* ; of which Three have been publish'd, and the Fourth expect very shortly.

Seed, what shall become of so much Seed as is lost? either in Sleep, or by such dishonest Means as *Er* and *Onan* practis'd, or which being receiv'd into the Womb never cometh to Conception? What, say they, shall so many Souls be lost? or shall they be choak'd in the Womb? or shall they remain alone without Bodies? seeing it is certain they are not to be accounted amongst the Number of Men? In a Word, because it cannot be deny'd but much Seed passeth from Man which never cometh to Perfection, no not to Conception, hence they conclude, that if the Soul passeth in the Seed, then many Souls perish, and so the Soul shall not be immortal.

But these conceive not rightly, yea, too basely and brutishly of the Soul's Generation, imagining that which no Man sound in his Wits will go about to maintain. For the Soul never passeth in the Seed, but at the Instant of Conception, and from thenceforth a new Soul remaineth in the conceiv'd Fruit. And whensoever the Seed proves not effectual, the Soul remains as it was, whatever becomes of the Seed; for the Soul is never procreated but in Conception, when both Seeds meet in a due Proportion, and become one, and when the efficient Power of God concurring with all other natural Causes, do out of the Substance of the generating Souls, produce another, together with a Body capable of that divine Form.

Some Resemblance whereof we may see in the lighting of a Lamp or Candle; for as Fire is the most spiritual of all corporal Substances, so by it we may have the clearest Resemblance in this Case: The Soul is not kindled at every Conjunction of Seeds, but only then when it is blown by the efficient Power of God, which meeting with all other natural Causes, out of the Matter of these Flames apply'd, this new heavenly Flame, the Soul, is produc'd. And hence it cometh to pass, not only that Souls perish not when any Seed is lost, but also that in Case Man's Seed be mingled with other Creatures, as it sometimes happeneth, such unkindly Conceptions are never inform'd with reasonable Souls; not only for that there is a Want in the concurrence of all natural Causes, but because God doth not confer his efficient Power but where and when he pleaseth. To conclude, therefore it appeareth that Souls are neither lost nor choak'd in the Womb, nor yet constrain'd to live alone without Bodies when the Seed proves not effectual, for then there is no Soul produc'd; I will not say but there may be Fire, but in that Case, I dare say, there is no such Flame kindled.

Q. Is it possible to prove the Existence of Atoms, or to imagine a Corporeal Thing indivisible.

A. That I may solidly evince the Existency of Atoms, we must suppose, that every Compound may be divided into so many Parts as there are which make the Compound, therefore Division ought necessarily to cease when there is a Failure of Parts to be divided; on the other Side, there is no End of it as long as there are Particles to be divided; one of the Two we must allow: That is, either that a Body cannot be so exactly divided, but that there always remain divisible Parts in infinitum; or that there are Parts after a certain Number of Divisions, which will not admit any further Division. *Aristotle* stands for the former, but *Gassendus* and the ancient Philosophers do defend the latter, and according to this last Doctrine, after all the Divisions are made,

nothing can remain besides Atoms, that is, indivisible Beings, which are the first Elements of natural Bodies.

I confess, it is hard to imagine a Corporeal Thing to be indivisible, because we see nothing in this World which is not divisible, but this makes nothing against Atoms, which are Corporeal, because they compose Bodies, and are indivisible, because they are the first, and most simple Elements of Bodies. Hence arises another Difficulty, because it cannot be easily explain'd; after what Manner a Thing that is divisible, is compos'd of Parts which are indivisible.

Impartial Minds do not find so much Difficulty in conceiving this Matter, as those do, who follow the Prejudices which they have receiv'd. First, These Men who are thus prepossess'd, do not consider, that there are many Things which escape our Senses, and yet are most real. Secondly, They do not consider that that which composes a Body is not a Compound, as we see that Unity makes Number, tho' it self be not a Number: Letters, whereof Nouns and Words are fram'd, yet are neither the one nor the other. The Drops of Water, whereof Rivers do consist, are not Rivers; so Atoms, tho' they are invisible and indivisible, yet they compose Bodies which are visible and divisible.

Aristotle and his Followers, do teach us, That a small Body, as for Example, a Millet Seed, is divisible in infinitum, and that it contains an infinite Number of Parts; which being suppos'd, it may be concluded, that there are as many Parts in the Millet Seed as there are in the whole Terrestrial Globe: Also according to this Opinion, we must grant, that a Body cannot be divided into as many Parts as really it may, and charnel the hither or further End of a Staff can be found, nor that there is a Circle or perfect Pyramid, nor that the Parts of a Body can be immediately divided. All which Consequences, as they are absolutely necessary, so they are all equally absurd.

Descartes did endeavour to free himself from this Difficulty, by saying that the Number of the Parts of the Millet Seed was neither finite nor infinite, but only that they were indefinite: But the Evasion is ridiculous, and these Two Philosophers are forc'd to confess, that every Part of the Millet Seed hath its Extension, and if their Number be either infinite or indefinite, then their Extensions also will be either infinite or indefinite at the least, which is absurd to affirm. I add no more, to avoid Scholastick Intricacies and Distinctions.

A D V E R T I S E M E N T.

††† *The Christian's Gazette, or News chiefly respecting the Invisible World; being a Pacquet for the pious Virtuosi on Subjects never started before. Written by John Dunton, Author of the Essay entitl'd The Hazard of a Death Bed-Repentance. Price 1 s.*

*** *The Amorous War, or a Duel with the Passions, a Poem, in a Letter to a Friend. By a Gentleman of the University of Oxford. To which is added, the Defeat, or the Love vanquish'd, and again rallying with a Smile. Sold by Tho. Darrack, Printer, in Peterborough-Court in Little-Britain, Price 2 d.*

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